

# Issue 56

## Senior Options levy improves lives for seniors and saves taxpayers money

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The Senior Options levy, first passed by Franklin County voters 20 years ago, may not be as easy to find on the ballot in November: The “Senior Options” name was taken off the description of the tax measure this year. But voters should look for **Issue 56** and vote yes to replace and increase the amount that goes to much-needed and cost-effective programs for seniors.

The 1.3-mill, five-year levy would replace the current 0.9-mill one at a time of growing need: Baby boomers are driving a sharp rise in the senior population, while money from the state and from property taxes, because of lowered property values, is decreasing.

Under the new levy, homeowners would see a yearly increase of \$12.79 per year for every \$100,000 of home value, for a total cost of \$39.81 per \$100,000 each year. The levy is expected to generate \$34.2 million in 2013, compared with \$24.7 million this year under the expiring levy.

This is a reasonable price to pay for an important program that does not turn people away or maintain a long waiting list, unlike similar programs in many urban areas around the country. Senior Options, a program of the Franklin County Office on Aging, currently serves about 7,800 people with in-home services such as meal delivery and housekeeping assistance. Thousands more benefit from services outside the home, including transportation and referral services.

Senior Options funds are used efficiently, with the program saving money by using volunteers and doing additional fundraising on its own. About 45 percent of the program’s clients pay something toward their services under a sliding-fee scale.

The levy money also provides a good return on investment: The cost of keeping a client in his or her home is about \$1,000 per month, compared to an average cost of \$6,000 a month for nursing-home care. Franklin County has one of the lowest percentages of any Ohio county of people over age 60 in institutional care, which is more costly and less preferable to most. Senior Options clients on average also spend five fewer days per year in the hospital than other seniors, saving millions in health-care costs.

Everyone will deal with aging, typically first as a child of an aging parent and later, of course, by dealing first-hand with issues that seniors face. Previous Senior Options levies have passed by overwhelming margins. Franklin County voters are urged to again support Senior Options by voting yes on Issue 56, ensuring a safety net that increases peace of mind and quality of life for thousands of their neighbors and loved ones.

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